

China hungry for Aussie Angus

WHEN Boorowa butcher Sam Burton Taylor first visited China last year he found an appetite for 100 per cent Australian Angus beef. Feeding this demand is now at the forefront of his brand. After meeting with processors, wholesalers and retailers, he found a niche market for premium grass-fed Angus. A shipment of 23 tonnes left Australian shores on February 9 destined for China branded with the sticker KC Natural Beef. Now the focus is on developing and marketing the name in southern and northern China. "Angus and Australia are well recognised in China, but I didn't anticipate how strong the demand would be," Mr Burton Taylor said. "They play a very tight game and they know exactly the price they can pay and what they can get on the market so they are well researched." For the first shipment, beef was sourced from two of Mr Burton Taylor's regular clients. The cattle were processed on January 24 and aggregated in one container. "Our clients have been purchasing our bulls for some time so we have confidence in the quality of the meat," he said. "We had all of the beef MSA graded so we had all the detailed feedback on each of the animals." The need for importing premium beef stemmed from what Mr Burton Taylor described as a "fractured industry". "There definitely hasn't been the focus on genetics (in China) that there has been over here," he said. "We've found we've been able to get consistently high grading for our cattle off grass in all seasons; the longer term plan and the development of the relationship with China is about being able to give us and our local clients marketing opportunity."

Butcher Sam Burton Taylor is pictured with Kai Wu, a potential client from the Harbin province in Northern China.



Competitive edge to branding stud beef

FOLLOWING Angus beef from genetics to the plate is behind the brand recognition that is pushing the next step in the journey for Boorowa butcher Sam Burton Taylor. Creating a product that is recognised in the domestic and international market goes back to a grassroots level, he said. Kenny's Creek Angus stud is run by Mr Burton Taylor's parents Nick and Julia – and a move in June 2010 saw him break off and buy a butcher shop, building his own business and learning from the ground up. He has been "connecting the dots" between the family stud and the data for the cattle they've been killing ever since.



"The whole thing for me is I wanted to connect myself with the property and I had to find a way I could add value," Mr Burton Taylor said. "My grandfather was always a butcher and I always enjoyed that side of it. "So I bought a butcher shop and started my apprenticeship and I have recently finished the formal part of my training." This business venture marked the beginning of understanding the importance of retailing beef for Sam's Paddock.

The butcher shop now has an online presence offering regular delivery to Canberra and Sydney. But the link between the family stud and the shop is the key to spreading the brand, Mr Burton Taylor said.

"We've got an Angus stud, we're killing our own cattle and we're buying cattle back from our bull and female clients – we're connecting it from the genetics back to the plate," he said. "It's giving us a bit of an edge in performing in the stud game."

Throughout the 25 years the stud has been operating, the family has been using estimated breeding values (EBVs) to gain an understanding of each animal and relevant data on each carcass. "We've been marrying up that data and getting a good feel on the genetics," Mr Burton Taylor said. "The big thing for us is to get cattle that kill well on grass so we can eliminate the grain component. "We are finding in the industry performance on the hook and eventually the plate is increasingly being linked back to producers."

The premium beef Mr Burton Taylor's referring to has just become even more integral to his operation, after a recent deal with Chinese clients kick started his presence in the export market. Branded with the name KC Natural Beef, the Burton Taylors are putting 100 per cent Australian Angus grass-fed beef in to high-end restaurants and retail outlets throughout China. The first shipment, which left on February 9, was sourced from local clients throughout NSW and Victoria.

"I buy most of the Angus off our bull clients and some off my father – so I am always informed and well aware of where that product has come from," Mr Burton Taylor said.

"Essentially, our own beef brand has given us the opportunity to connect these genetics back and follow them through to the end customer – whether that is a domestic or international client."

By Simone Norrie

Sam Burton Taylor of Sam's Paddock, Boorowa. Photo: The Canberra Times.